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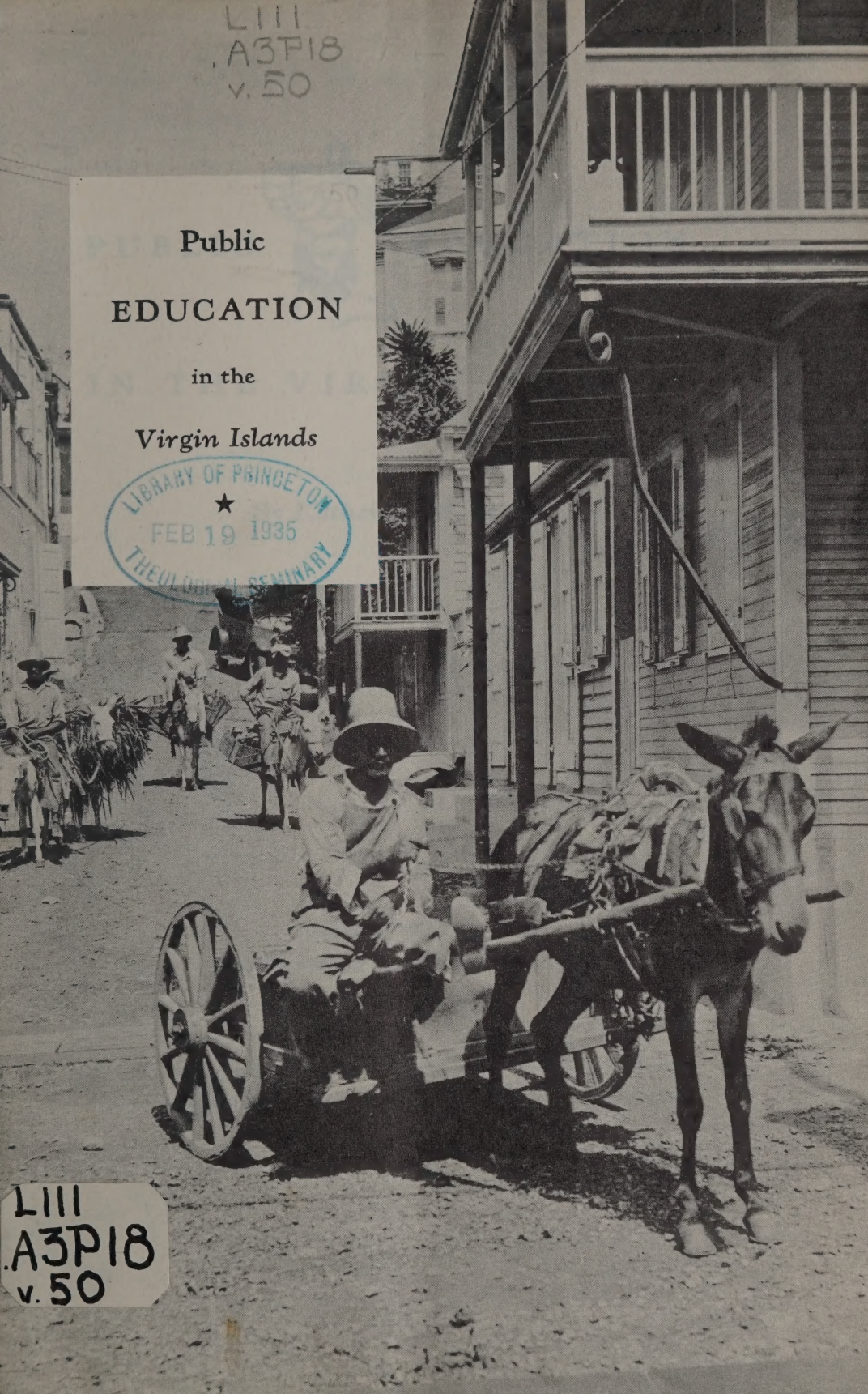

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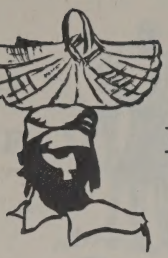
PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



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FEB 19 1935
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

By Katherine M. Cook

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NOTE

THIS *is Pamphlet No. 50 and is issued by the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education. Harold L. Ickes is Secretary of the Interior and George F. Zook is Commissioner of Education. Katherine M. Cook, the author of this Pamphlet, is Chief of the Division of Special Problems.*

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

IN THE *Virgin Islands, as in other outlying parts of the United States, a public-school system patterned in many essentials after that on the mainland, was established with American occupation. With the change to civil governmental control which took place in 1931, a definite program of social and economic rehabilitation of the people of the islands was inaugurated. Of this program, education was made and now is an integral and responsible part. It is a long-time program formulated with a definite realization of the part education must play in the realization of the ultimate goal of economic independence and social progress for the people of the islands.*

School organization and practices, especially curricular offerings, are very naturally just now in a transitional and semiexperimental stage, but faced toward the achievement of quite definite social and economic objectives. Progress in education is, therefore, of unusual interest on the mainland as well as to the people of the islands.

This account of the present educational situation in the Virgin Islands is the result of personal observation of the schools made possible through the courtesy of all the officials but especially of the Director of Education and his staff.

The purchase of the Danish West Indies by the United States was the result of a long series of negotiations begun by Secretary Seward at the suggestion of President Lincoln during the Civil War. They were then the seat of blockade running, and this fact as well as their strategic position as a defense base became a matter of interest. Later when the

United States became interested in Panama, negotiations were renewed, but it was not until during the World War that the purchase was finally consummated. In 1917 the United States purchased the islands from Denmark for 25 million dollars. They were and are considered a strategic defense base because of their position commanding the Atlantic approach to the Panama Canal and the southern section of the United States. Many authorities, including the Governor of the islands, believe they are worth much more than their cost as a defense investment alone. "The purchase price represents little more than half the cost of a modern battleship", according to a recent statement of the Governor.

PART I

About the Country and its People

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS, like Puerto Rico, were discovered by Columbus on his second voyage to America in 1493. Columbus named the group as a whole "The Virgins". Under Danish rule they were known as the Danish West Indies and the capital, now St. Thomas, as Charlotte Amalie.

In the early days of their history they changed hands frequently. Early explorers of many countries, Dutch, English, Spanish, and French, visited them at intervals, and the Danes made several early, unsuccessful attempts at colonization. During the seventeenth century they were the resort of buccanneers, and tradition still associates with them the names of such notorious pirates as Blackbeard and Bluebeard, whose castles on St. Thomas are still the objectives of numbers of tourists visiting the West Indies. In the eighteenth century Great Britain held them at least twice, but eventually they became the permanent property of the Danes, who held them for at least 250 years preceding their purchase by the United States.

Slavery and insurrection have played a prominent and tragic part in their history. Because of their position and the excellent harbor of St. Thomas, they were an important slave market while slavery thrived. For years the settlers of the islands flourished through cotton and sugar plantations cultivated by slave labor. In 1748, on July 4, the Danes proclaimed the freedom of the

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slaves, following the last of many insurrections during which the slaves tore up the public whipping post in St. Thomas and threw it into the sea.

The strategic position of the Virgin Islands—the main consideration in their purchase—does not, however, constitute their only resource, nor detract from the importance of the many factors conditioning the welfare of the people who have now become a part of the citizenship of the United States.

The Virgin Islands lie southeast of the United States as a whole; they are approximately 1,400 miles, chiefly south but a little east from our north Atlantic coast and about 1,000 miles almost due east from Florida. There are 50 islands in the group, many of which are small and uninhabited. Three are of considerable size and importance: St. Thomas and St. John, which lie close together, and St. Croix the largest of the three, lying approximately 40 miles to the south of St. Thomas. Their combined area is approximately 132 square miles—about twice that of the District of Columbia. The total population in 1932 was 22,000. Their smallness in area and population and their isolation are important factors in an appreciation of their social and educational problems.

The capital city is St. Thomas—the Charlotte Amalie of Jorgen Iversen its founder, who in 1672 named it in honor of the Queen of Denmark. It is located on the island of the same name and is 1,440 miles—a 5-day trip by boat—from the city of New York. There is regular communication and mail service also by plane from Miami, Fla.; the plane leaves Miami each Friday morning, stops over night en route at San Juan, P.R., and arrives Saturday morning at St. Thomas. There is regular weekly boat communication with San Juan, P.R., and between St. Thomas and St. Croix. Boats making the West Indian cruise and certain European steamers to South America or through the Canal also touch the islands en route.

St. Croix, the boyhood home of Alexander Hamilton, is the largest of the islands. It is 84 square miles in area and has a population of about 11,400, a high percentage of which is concentrated in two small cities of the island, Christiansted and Frederiksted, of approximately 4,000 and 3,000 people, respectively. St. Croix is almost wholly agricultural. Its products are

cattle, which find a market in nearby Puerto Rico, and sugar and vegetables, which are shipped chiefly to the United States. Growing vegetables for the New York markets, a recently established industry, is believed to offer much promise as a paying occupation, since certain vegetables can reach the New York market from St. Thomas some weeks earlier than similar products from Florida.

The harbor at St. Thomas.

St. Thomas is 28 square miles in area and has a population of 9,800. Its people have long been dependent for their livelihood largely on the business which the excellent harbor facilities of its one city, St. Thomas, afford. About three-fourths of the people of the island live in the city of St. Thomas. They are said to be excellent traders, an occupation in which opportunities were abundant when ships in large numbers stopped for coaling and transfer of cargo, as they did for many years.

St. John is the smallest of the three inhabited islands. It has an area of less than 20 square miles and a population of but 765. Its people live by farming, basket making, and preparing charcoal.

Charcoal is practically the only fuel used for cooking in the Virgin Islands and has an extensive market also in Puerto Rico.

The people of the islands are in large part descendents of slaves, and their history has been one of struggle against adverse conditions. The colored population, constituting more than 90 percent of the total, is of many varieties, including former slaves,

A typical shop or store in St. Thomas.

and descendants of slaves from the Danish and British West Indies, Haiti, and Martinique; free Negroes who by industry have established themselves as heads of plantations, in business, and in industries; professional men, including doctors, lawyers, and teachers; and politicians, musicians, and writers. The strictly white population, constituting only about 3 percent of the total, is made up of Danish, English, Irish, and American families, many of whom have taken over plantations or are engaged in business or the professions or are in governmental positions. There is a small French colony in St. Thomas, made up for the most part of fishermen.

The language is English, probably an inheritance from the days of British sovereignty and British settlement. During the long occupation of the Danes no effort was made to change it, and schools were taught in English. It is a West Indian variety, to be sure, not always readily understood by the visitor from the mainland, but English no less. An interesting formality and courtesy characterize the speech of the islanders, and they have a certain dignity of bearing and pride, perhaps of race or status—one doesn't know exactly what—which has a charm all its own.

The people in appearance and in dress and in manner of living are not wholly unlike those of the other West Indies, some of which are very close by—the British island of Tortola, for example, is separated by only 5 miles of water from St. Thomas. Many of the women, in the rural districts especially, wear the old-fashioned cotton dresses—often white, and of immaculate cleanliness—with the palm woven hats and varicolored bandanas —sometimes more than one of each—on their heads. Covering the head from the night air or the rain is apparently a traditional practice much respected by the natives. It has also a utilitarian purpose, since incredible loads, from colorful trays of fruit to heavy baskets of coal, are carried by the islanders on their heads. Even little children carrying heavy cans of water on their heads are by no means uncommon sights.

In spite of obvious and widespread poverty, the roads, the streets, the homes, and the people themselves present a remarkably clean and orderly appearance. The towns are particularly attractive, with their substantial-looking white, red-roofed houses—apparently a Danish variety of Spanish architecture. St. Thomas, with its clean, rain-swept streets, most of them "running up hill"—they are really flights of steps lined on either side by doorsteps arched over gutters that water may drain underneath—has been quite appropriately called the original "Spotless Town" of the well-known advertisements. In cleanliness and sanitation, in the complete absence of beggars and of most of the common tropical diseases such as hookworm and yellow fever, the Virgin Islands are said to be unique among West Indian islands. They have a record for a high degree of literacy, the percentage being 98.

There are practically no streams on the islands. For their supply of fresh water the people are dependent on the rainfall. Cisterns catch this precious rainfall and certain sections of the steep hillsides of the picturesquely located city of St. Thomas—it is built on three hills sloping steeply down to the ocean—are covered with cement to preserve more fully the supply.

The climate of the Virgin Islands and their scenic attractiveness, the latter due in part to their location where the Atlantic and Caribbean waters meet, but also to the picturesqueness of the islands themselves, are among their chief assets. The temperature is practically uniform throughout the year, with a maximum of 89 degrees during the summer and of 85 in the winter. The minimum ranges from 71 in winter to 76 or 77 in the summer. "Contrary to popular belief," says the Governor of the islands,[1] "it is not hot in summer. The northeast trade winds blow throughout the year. It is all very picturesque and romantic. On St. Thomas are Blackbeard and Bluebeard Castles, reminders of the old pirate days when these robbers of the sea fought their way to booty, revelry, and early death; while on St. Croix are the picturesque old sugar mills, relics of the grand days of the estate owners when every estate had its own cane mill driven by the wind, where the owner ground his own sugar and made his own rum."

Social and Economic Conditions Influencing Education

HOW *the Islands are Governed* ★ From their purchase by the United States in 1917, to 1931, the Virgin Islands were a naval station and were governed by the Navy Department. The successive governors during those years were officers of the United States Navy. After a comprehensive social and economic survey of the islands and their people, closely followed by an equally comprehensive study of the educational situation, Congress transferred responsibility to the Department of the Interior—the

[1] Radio address, April 1932. Washington, D.C., Department of the Interior. Mimeographed.

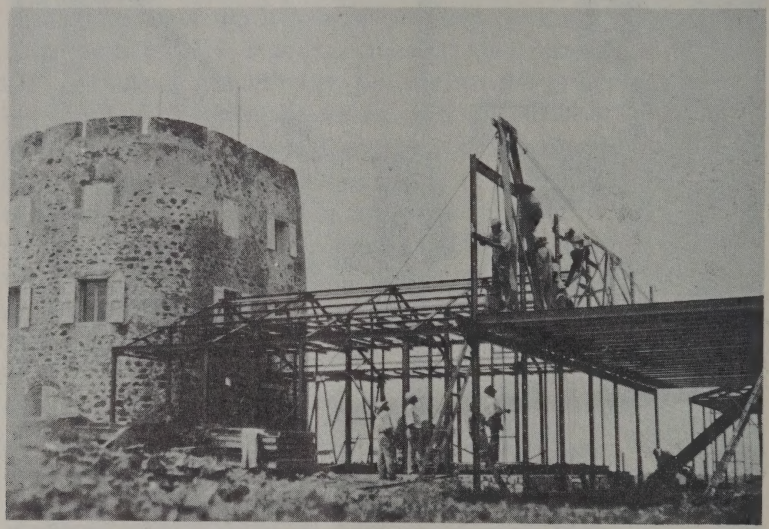
government being placed thereby under civil control. A governor and an executive staff were appointed, the former by the President; the latter by the Secretary of the Interior; they were installed in March 1931, and the new regime was immediately under way.

En route home after the day's marketing

The Governor and his staff and the heads of the various departments are resident in St. Thomas, the capital of the islands. The lieutenant governor resides in and is chief executive officer of the island of St. Croix, except of course when the Governor is in residence there. There are departments of public health, industry, public works, public welfare, education, with a commissioner or director in charge, and a government attorney, all part of the executive staff. There is a government agricultural experiment station, now also a vocational school; two well-equipped hospitals under government control, physicians and nurses assigned to

different sections of the islands and such minor governmental and municipal officials as are necessary for the orderly conduct of the government and to carry on the rehabilitation program.

The judicial department includes a judge of the district court appointed by the Governor, three police court judges, one in each of the three islands, and necessary clerical assistants.



Bluebeard's Castle becomes a part of the new Government hotel.

The legislative branch consists of two Colonial Councils, whose members are appointed by the Governor or elected by the people. The Council of St. Thomas and St. John has 16 members, including a chairman and vice chairman; 4 are appointed by the Governor, the others are elected by the people. The Council of St. Croix has 19 members, including a chairman and vice chairman, 5 of whom are appointed by the Governor; the others are elected. There are a number of commissions on roads, hospitals, health, etc.; municipal committees and boards, appointed by the Governor for special purposes or to perform special functions. The Colonial Councils are assigned the functions usually accorded to city councils in the United States and some of the functions of

county and State governments.[2] Occasionally the councils sit together and pass resolutions in the nature of petitions to Congress or recommendations to the Governor.

Suffrage is restricted to males of "unblemished character" who are 25 years of age and over and who have a clear annual income of $300. They must have resided on the islands for 5 years. There are fewer than a thousand voters who qualify under these restrictions, three-fourths of whom are colored.

The citizenship status of the people of the Virgin Islands was not well defined until 1927, when native residents of the Virgin Islands were admitted to United States citizenship. Previous to that time they had been "citizens of the Virgin Islands of the United States", but not citizens of the United States. The income and sex qualifications for suffrage appear to be a carry-over from the Danish regime.

SOME *Paramount Economic Problems* ★ Socially and economically the situation in the Virgin Islands is far from satisfactory. The economic status of the people, both rural and urban, involves serious problems. There is considerable diversity of occupations and occupational interests, and the Islands are separated widely by ocean channels. They do not form an economic unit, nor because of questions of caste and color, a social one. In population and in productiveness they are decreasing and had been decreasing many years before their purchase from Denmark. The decline in population is not peculiar to the American Virgin Islands, but is shared by neighboring West Indies, British and Dutch, and has continued in many of them for more than a generation.

The people depend for their subsistence on the production and the exportation of sugar from St. Croix, on the fueling of ships and other port activities in St. Thomas, and on the export of bay rum and cattle and some tourist trade. Sugar production and occupations connected with shipping dominate the industrial and commercial life. The decline in productiveness is due to the decline in sugar cultivation, to changed conditions of trade affecting St. Thomas as a transshipping base, and to general financial con-

[2] Tucker, Rufus. Economic Conditions of the Virgin Islands. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office.

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ditions including the crisis of 1920 from which recovery was not completed when the crisis of 1929 intensified already serious conditions.

Typical road scene near St. Thomas.

In St. Croix as elsewhere the sugar industry is a large plantation industry. Most of the cultivated land on the island is in the hands of a few people. Wages on sugar plantations are low. Although they have improved under American occupation, they still average from 40 to 80 cents per day. Under recent adverse conditions certain large sugar plantations are no longer in operation or are in poor financial condition. Much land formerly in cane is no longer cultivated as such but is in pasture or "bush".

Similarly depreciation has occurred in St. Thomas. The city became a free port in 1764, and for many years was a trading and coaling station of considerable importance being near the most direct route from Europe to Panama and from the east coast of

South America to Atlantic ports of the United States. It is the best located harbor in the West Indies and was, therefore, in former days the center of a large volume of traffic and an important coaling station.[3] Changes in trade routes, the prevalence of oil-burning vessels, and other trade conditions, some of them connected with the American occupation, have contributed to the decrease in port activities. Work on the docks is irregular and pay is low. Much of the coaling is done by women at a very low wage.

The banking situation in the islands has had an important influence on their economic welfare. The National Bank of the Danish West Indies, with offices in each of the three cities of the Islands, will discontinue when its charter expires in 1934. Danish stockholders have been more and more cautious about loans as the date of withdrawal approached, and credit has therefore been seriously interfered with. Notes issued in the old local currency were for some years below par in United States gold, making the demand urgent over a period of several years for replacement by an American bank. The use of Danish currency—the Danish franc is the basic unit, though the American dollar passes current also—is an added complication. The necessary adjustments which have recently been provided for by Congress will result in the establishment of an American bank and the elimination of inconveniences of the kind suggested. These readjustments should result in facilitating economic progress.

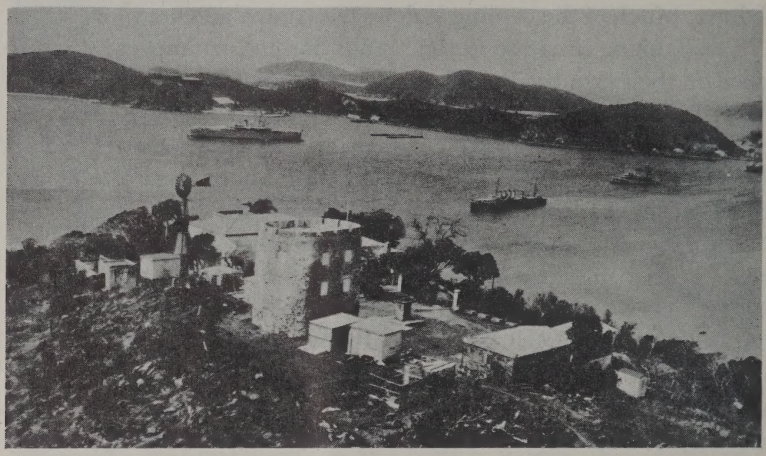
All in all it is apparent that the economic situation is a serious one and leaves much to be done before a satisfactory status is attained. The taxable wealth is estimated at $350 per person; there are too few productive industries, low wages prevail, and unemployment and irregular employment are all too common. A large number of people, estimated at 1,000 in 1929, are on dole. The low living standards which accompany such conditions, lack of vegetables, milk, and other ingredients of an adequate and varied diet, result in much malnutrition, in the prevalence of gastro-intestinal diseases, and in a high death rate—especially among infants.

To the high death rate and the increasing emigration to continental United States the reduction in population is due. There

[3] Ibid.

are reported 5,000 Virgin Islanders in New York City in 1932, indicating a high percentage of migration in view of the small population—22,000—of the islands.

THE *Questions of Race and Caste* ★ The population, as indicated before, is predominantly Negro. As classified in the 1930 census it is as follows: Negroes 78.3 percent, mixed 12.4 percent, white



Bluebeard's Castle and the harbor.

9.1 percent, other races 0.2 percent. The figures cannot indicate the shades of color and caste and the prejudice existing among the groups based on these differences. The situation is elucidated in the report of the study sponsored by Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes as a complex of caste and prejudice which cannot be interpreted in the light of American color prejudice. For example, according to the report, certain groups known as "high yellows" consider themselves of distinguished ancestry and therefore equal to or superior to whites. There are many variations both in color and caste, the latter often more subtle than the former, resulting in "a complex of caste gone to seed." It is apparent that community solidarity is difficult to achieve under such conditions and that until tolerance and mutual appreciations among the groups are attained, progress will continue to be unsatisfactory.

THE *Disorganized Family Life* ★ One of the most serious problems with which the education and welfare departments are concerned is the chaotic and disorganized condition of family life. Marital relations are so irregular, illegitimacy so common, that for most of the humbler people no family life exists,[4] and "no orderly procedure has been supplied to take the place of family life for great numbers of illegitimate children."[5] It follows that a surprisingly high percentage of the children of the Virgin Islands lack the protection and care ordinarily provided by wholesome family life, and taken for granted under normal conditions. While the school encounters the greatest difficulties from this situation, it is probably also the institution which can eventually offer most toward its solution.

POLICIES *of Rehabilitation and Development* ★ The policy of Congress so far has been one of mutual cooperation; to work with the islanders in plans that will eventually improve their economic condition, make the island government self-supporting and at the same time achieve desirable objectives in human development. In recent years Congress has appropriated for administrative purposes approximately $400,000 per year, matching dollar for dollar the revenue raised in the islands. The money is appropriated for current expenses of the government, and with certain additional appropriations, is directed also toward solving gradually the most serious of the many economic and social problems.

To promote economic independence of individuals interested in farming but unable to buy land and improvements, the government has recently purchased two large estates. They will be divided into small homesteads and sold on long-time payments to promising purchasers. As plans materialize and money becomes available further purchases will be made and gradually ownership of small plots will replace tenantry and concentration of large land holdings among too few individuals. In this program and in improving farm methods and farm life, the agricultural experiment station is cooperating.

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[4] Annual report, Governor of the Virgin Islands, 1931.

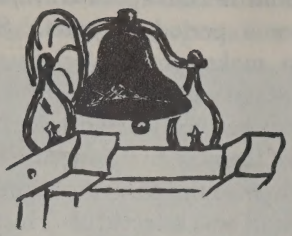
[5] Report of the educational survey of the Virgin Islands. Hampton, Va., Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1929.

Cooperatives for the sale of farm produce are successfully operating, and vegetables heretofore practically unknown on the islands are being produced for sale and to vary the native diet. Cooperatives are also marketing successfully certain handicrafts and canned products. The Department of Industries, in cooperation with the schools, is developing new handicrafts and encouraging and assisting in the sale of others. Pottery and rug making are examples of recently developed industries. Both were initiated in and are still sponsored by the school system.

Other activities under way are concerned with the promotion of the tourist trade through securing steamship service at reasonable rates, building of a modern hotel and encouraging winter residents; promoting the bay rum, cattle, and fishing industries, and placing them on a better basis for production and marketing, encouragement of food gardens, fruit and vegetable canning, and exploring the possibilities of cotton as a paying crop in St. Croix.

For the rehabilitation of the people, promoting their health, improving standards of living; for general remedial work including family rehabilitation and the care of orphan and dependent children, the Government has established departments of health, of public welfare, and of education. These are coordinating their efforts with the assistance of other governmental departments in long-term remedial plans as well as relief measures.

PART II

About the  *Public Schools*

A SCHOOL SYSTEM reasonably efficient in inculcating an elementary knowledge of the three R's and successful in creating a literate population was well established in the Virgin Islands prior to the transfer of the government to civil control. The schools were of the traditional, formal, and academic type which apparently did not function practically in raising standards of living or in improving the social and economic life of the people. At the request of the Secretary of the Navy a first-hand study of the school system was made by a committee of specialists from the mainland under the auspices of Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes. The committee reported early in 1929 outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the school system and making important recommendations for reorganization. Among the most significant of the recommendations addressed to the education authorities were that education should articulate with the local situation; that steps should be taken to bridge the gap between the home and the school; that standards of teaching should be raised; and that facilities for health, industrial, and agricultural training should be improved and increased.

The committee also addressed certain recommendations to the civil authorities, stating that they found the schools inadequately supported and the importance of education inadequately realized. They recommended that in financial and moral support and in responsibility for the general welfare, education be more generously provided for and that it have a larger place among the activities of the government. They found that promoting economic independence, higher standards of living, improved sani-

tary and health conditions, and reestablishing family life, were all functions which should be incorporated into an educational program extending over a period of years. Such a program should be designed to make progress gradually rather than through radical innovation and artificial substitution.

These recommendations became basic considerations in the formulation of the policies of the new civil administration. A director of education in sympathy with the program suggested and in part outlined by the survey staff was selected and installed with other civil officials. He was charged with the responsibility of redirecting objectives, modernizing the curriculum, and reorganizing the educational program in harmony with the government's rehabilitation program.

School Administration and Organization

THE school system of the Virgin Islands is an integral part of the administration of the civil government and functions as a department of the executive organization headed by the Governor. There is no board of education corresponding to State, county, or city boards on the mainland to which the educational officials are responsible and which is in turn responsible for the support and efficiency of the schools. Schools are supported by direct appropriation from governmental funds raised in part from Island revenues and in part appropriated by Congress. The amount appropriated depends, of course, on the available revenues and is subject to decision of the executive office. There is no fixed permanent appropriation or school fund or school tax as such. Responsibility for the administration of the system, including the expenditure of funds allotted for the purpose, is assigned to a director of education appointed by the Secretary of the Interior and directly responsible to the Governor for the conduct of the school system. Approximately $100,000 per year has been appropriated for schools under the present civil government—an approximate expenditure of $35 per capita of school enrollment.

It is apparent that the administrative set-up does not provide direct responsibility for nor participation in the support and management of the schools on the part of the people of the Virgin

Islands. This handicap is met in part in two ways: Through the attitude of the officials themselves toward the people and the schools and through liberal interpretation of the functions of two

Teacher and children in a typical rural school.

reviewing and advisory boards, one concerned with schools of St. Thomas and St. John, and one with those of St. Croix. The school officials definitely cooperate and advise with the people on matters concerned with education and aim to promote, through friendly association and consultation, wider understanding of the place of education in their future welfare and that of their children. Each reviewing board is composed of five members, and the director of education acts as secretary. Two officials of the government and three members of the respective Colonial Councils make up the voting membership. On the board of education of St. Thomas and St. John are: The government attorney, chairman; the government secretary, the chairman of the Colonial

Council ex officio and two other members of the Council, one of whom is selected by the Council and the other by the three ex-officio members and the one Council selection. The Educational Board of Review of St. Croix is composed and selected in the same way except that the Lieutenant Governor replaces the government secretary as vice chairman; the three Council members are representatives of the Council of St. Croix.

The director of education assumes most of the responsibilities usually assigned to city superintendents and city boards of education on the mainland for all public schools of the Islands. He selects his staff, including supervisory assistants, special teachers, principals, and teachers; fixes qualifications within legal requirements; is responsible for the organization of the schools, formulation of courses of study, selection of textbooks, and similar educational activities. Textbooks are supplied free by the department of education.

The staff, number and type of schools, term, etc., for 1932–33 are as follows:

The director is assisted by a supervisor of elementary schools, who directs the supervision of all the elementary schools, and by four additional supervisors—one of music, two of health, and one of home economics. The elementary supervisor personally supervises the elementary schools of St. Thomas and St. John. Two part-time supervisors, formerly Jeanes supervisors on the mainland, are assistant supervisors for the schools of St. Croix.

Schools are organized on the 6–3–3 plan. There is one junior-senior high school offering 6 years of work in St. Thomas, and two junior high schools, one in each of the towns of St. Croix, offering 3 years of work of junior high school grade. There are 19 elementary schools, each offering 6 years of elementary work, of which 8 are in St. Thomas, 7 in St. Croix, and 4 in St. John.

There are 118 teachers, including 23 special teachers, 10 of manual arts, 8 of home economics, and 5 of music, and 8 high-school teachers. There are also 2 playground supervisors and 3 school nurses. The total enrollment for 1931–32 in the 12 grades of the public schools was 3,228; in 9 grades of private schools, 1,179. The school term is 200 days in length. In percentage of enrollment, in regularity of attendance, and in length of term the schools

appear to have had more than the customary success. Practically all children of school age are enrolled in school and attend with reasonable regularity.

At one of the recently established nursery schools.

The private as well as the public schools are supervised by the director of education and his assistants. The services of school nurses, as well as medical and dental service at public expense, are available to all children whether enrolled in public or in private schools.

THE *Vocational Institute* ★ The survey commission to which reference has been made above, recommended as part of the new program the establishment of a vocational school. An appropriation was made by the Federal Government for this purpose and the use of the allotted funds authorized in the spring of 1932. The agricultural station on St. Croix was selected as the site and the build-

ings reconstructed to meet the needs of dormitory and classrooms. The purpose of the school is to prepare a selected group of boys—later it is hoped provision will be made for girls also—to become civic and occupational leaders.

Fifteen boys were selected to make up the initial student body from 30 candidates on the basis of intelligence, according to standard tests, former school records, personality as judged by a personal interview with the director of education, and on certain recommendations of citizens and others. The following September 26 boys, similarly selected were enrolled. Eventually the school will develop into a senior high school offering 3 years of work and admitting graduates of the junior high schools.

The faculty in 1932–33 is made up of a principal, 2 teachers of academic subjects, 1 of extracurricular activities, 3 members of the Agricultural Station staff as part-time instructors of agriculture, and 1 part-time instructor in iron working. There is a matron in charge of the dining and dormitory facilities. The students have the opportunity to earn their way by working on the Agricultural Station grounds.

The courses include English, history, economic geography, general science, arithmetic, and orientation courses in the following occupations: Farm crops, dairying, animal husbandry, blacksmithing, wheelwrighting, horticulture, carpentry and cabinet making, auto mechanics, and elementary surveying.

The School Curricula

IN ALL of the schools curriculum revision is now in process. It has been stated that the vocational school was very recently established with the objective of training occupational leaders for the established industries and those new ones which the Government is fostering and expects to foster. The situation itself and the needs of the people are peculiar to the islands, and it is believed that success depends upon the formulation of a program de novo which, while profiting by the experiences of similar and comparable schools elsewhere, will be designed definitely for the conditions peculiar to and the objectives desirable in the local situation.

There is but one high school—that at St. Thomas—offering complete secondary curricula and including both junior and senior high school departments. The senior high school grades were added in 1931 and in their addition represent a new departure in advanced secondary opportunities. Pupils will be admitted from the junior high school department and from the two junior high schools in St. Croix as candidates become available.

The St. Thomas High School offers the regular college-preparatory, vocational, and prevocational courses, and two courses for prospective teachers. Vocational offerings under "Practical Arts" include carpentry and woodworking, basketry, boat building, home economics including sewing and needlework, pottery, and rug making. Pottery and rug making, both of which were initiated as high-school courses, promise to develop into important island industries. As the resources of the islands are explored and new industries and new occupations open up, the vocational offerings of the high school will be correspondingly increased.

Revision is under way in the elementary schools. Formal work in the three R's is gradually giving place to practical activity programs emphasizing health, music, character building, sewing, and other practical phases of homemaking, carpentry and woodworking, basket weaving, and the like, closely associated with local needs and community life. As yet no printed course based on the results of the reorganizations under way is available. Progress is being made in revision of content and methods of instruction largely as a part of the supervisory program.

THE *Extracurricular Activities* ★ Usual extracurricular activities, such as dramatics, class plays, school performances on special occasions, and the like, are carried on under school auspices in connection with the junior and senior high schools. A school paper is published by the St. Thomas High School, for which students are chiefly responsible. Four-H clubs have been organized in the rural sections of St. Croix, and there are two literary clubs in the St. Thomas High School. An open-air theater was recently built by the faculty and students of one of the junior high schools in St. Croix. Parent-teacher associations have been organized in many of the schools with considerable success.

St. Thomas High School Program of Studies

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

VII	VIII	IX
English 5	English 5	English 5
American history 4	American history 5	Ancient history / Vocational economics } 5
Guidance 1	Virgin Islands history 5	*Mathematics 5
Mathematics 5	Mathematics 5	*General science 5
World geography 5	United States geography / Virgin Islands geography / Nature } 5	Practical arts 10
Practical arts 10	Practical arts 10	

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

X	XI	XII
English 5	American literature 5	English literature 5
*Economic geography 5	Economics 5	*United States history 5
World history 5	*Trigonometry / *Solid geometry } 5	*Botany and zoology 5
*Geometry 5	*Chemistry 5	*Advanced biology 5
*Biology 5	*Psychology 5	*Principles of education 5
*Art 5	*Art 5	*Art 5
*Spanish I 5	Spanish II 5	*Practice teaching 10
Practical arts 10	Practical arts 10	Practical arts 10

NOTE ★ *Studies marked with asterisk* [*] *are elective. Numbers correspond to periods per week.*

The Teaching Staff

PROBABLY the most serious problem the school system has to solve is concerned with the teaching staff. All of the elementary teachers are natives of the islands and practically all of them have only the education offered in the local schools. Up to 1931 there was no senior high school in the Virgin Islands; consequently academic training beyond the eighth or ninth grade was not available to the majority of prospective elementary-school teachers. There were no facilities for professional training of either preservice or in-service type. The result is that the teachers in the elementary schools are far below an acceptable standard in academic and professional qualifications. Complete and exact data on the qualifications of individual teachers are not available. Many of the teachers now in service have had considerable experience. The survey of 1929 found the educational status of teachers "incredibly low." Even now few of them have gone beyond the eighth grade, according to the most recent annual report of the Governor.

The salaries, while improving, are still inadequate to attract and retain a high-grade professional staff in the elementary grades, and apparently the importance of good teaching in these grades has not until recently been recognized. For the school year 1931–32 average monthly salaries ranged from $22.73 paid temporary teachers holding the lowest type of certificate, to $144.20 paid to high-school teachers. Third-class teachers received an average monthly salary of $26.92; second-class teachers, $46.26; special-subject teachers, $48.06, and first-class teachers, $76.19. The staff as a whole received an average salary of $50.89 monthly in Danish West Indian dollars.

The situation is being attacked from several different angles: [1] Qualifications for entering teachers are being raised gradually; high-school graduation as a minimum academic requirement can be expected shortly, since high-school facilities, including courses in education and practice teaching, are now available. [2] In-service training is provided for the teaching staff through summer schools and professional supervision. [3] Special classes in professional and academic subjects are conducted during the school

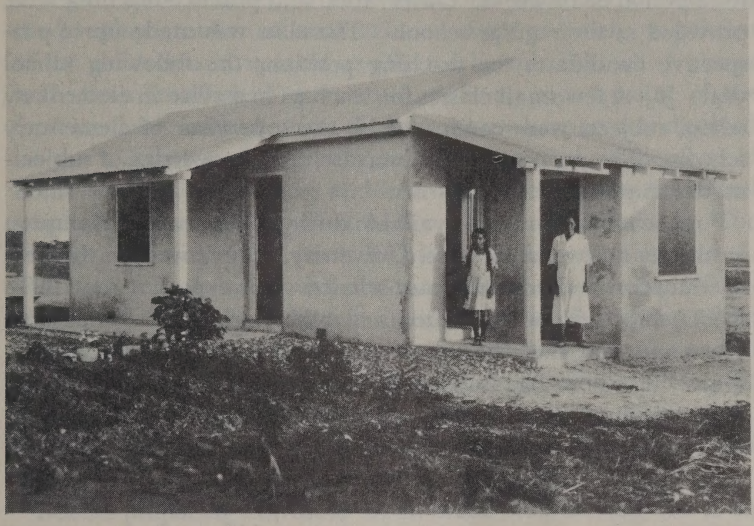
year. [4] A limited number of scholarships in educational institutions on the mainland are now available for prospective teachers.

In the summer of 1931 the first summer school for the training of teachers in service was established. It was conducted at St. Thomas for a period of 6 weeks and proved so effective for the purpose for which it was designed that plans were evolved for

A typical family home before the homestead plan.

conducting similar summer school sessions annually. The summer school in 1931 was held in two sections, one in St. Thomas and one in St. Croix, as a matter of convenience and economy for the teachers who attended. The boat fare between the two islands is $8, and for teachers working on a small salary this is a considerable item. The two sections were attended by 144 persons, most of whom were teachers. Beside regular classes in the content subjects and psychology and methods courses, an observation school was conducted. Regular periods were devoted to observation and conference, with selected superior teachers in charge. The 1933 session was held in cooperation with the Progressive

Education Association. A number of the instructors came from continental United States and were assisted by the local administrative and supervisory staff. Such an arrangement has many advantages for the more or less isolated local teachers, offering them an opportunity to enlarge their professional contacts while profiting by the regularly prescribed courses. Flexibility in the



The same family home after the homestead plan was effected.

summer school program is intended to enable the school officials to meet special needs of local teachers as they become apparent and in the long run is expected to have very desirable results.

In-service training of elementary teachers through supervision is being systematically carried on throughout the system. The staff includes trained supervisors who are providing intensive supervision of instruction through classroom visitation followed by conferences, planned professional reading, group conferences with teacher participation, the encouragement of informal experimentation in classroom methods, and the usual supervisory activities carried on in modern school systems. Supervision is planned not

only to keep teachers abreast of progressive practices in education, but to supply insofar as possible, the lack of pre-service professional training.

The special classes conducted for small groups of teachers during the school year were of two kinds: [*a*] A training class of five twelfth-grade girls in child psychology and methods, organized for a period of 16 weeks. Observation and practice teaching were provided in the regular schools. The class was made up of prospective candidates for teaching positions the following school year. [*b*] A few small classes for teachers in service in elementary school subjects were conducted by the supervisor of elementary schools. The purpose was to increase their knowledge of subject-matter material.

Four scholarships were available during 1933, two at Hampton Institute and two at Howard University. Three were in the field of education and one in library science. It is expected that these scholarships will be continued and others added in the coming years, and that the students availing themselves of such scholarships will be absorbed into the school system, gradually improving the professional status of the native teachers.

The School Health Program

THE health program of the schools represents a direct practical attack on some of the most serious problems of the islands suggested in the first chapter of this pamphlet. It has many admirable phases and includes certain excellent provisions worthy of emulation by a number of school systems on the mainland. Among these are the following: There is an adequate number of school nurses. Classrooms are visited regularly by the school nurses; children in need of attention are referred to them; certain examinations are regularly made and follow-up care under direction of the physician in charge is given when necessary. Annual health examination by a physician; hospital care and surgical attention and dental service all are available at public expense to all school children. These generous provisions, together with the professional supervision of classrooms elsewhere referred to, have apparently inspired teachers with some appreciation of the importance of health instruction

and the opportunities which the schools offer for ultimately improving conditions through such instruction. Among evidences of this attitude observed were school gardens, school lunches served in a large number of schools, and considerable effort to realize a closer coordination with the homes.

School luncheons were served during the school year 1931–32 to about 1,000 children in 12 schools, one phase of the attack on the pressing problem of malnutrition. Approximately 50 percent of the children are reported as affected by this evil, which comes both from insufficient quantity and from poor quality of the food available in the homes. Luncheons are prepared and served by the teachers and pupils under direction of the supervisor of home economics. Recipes and instructions for serving the school luncheon are mimeographed and on file in each school. The luncheon consists of a one-dish meal supplemented by bread. The rural schools have small one-room kitchens with simple charcoal pots for cooking and a few utensils. Generally a group of the older girls is responsible for a 1- or 2-week period, at the end of which the group changes, thereby giving all of the older girls experience in helping in the preparation and serving of the meal. The children have been provided with enamel bowls, spoons, and plates.

Besides preparing nutritious foods, much attention is given to an attractively served luncheon. The menu includes products raised in the school gardens as far as possible, or purchased at low prices and within the ability of the pupils to duplicate at home. Potato soup made of several vegetables, seasoned with a piece of boiling beef, other vegetable soups, beef stew with several vegetables, hot cocoa are among the foods which constitute the main dish in the suggested menus, supplemented with bread.

School Enrollment and Attendance

PRACTICALLY 100 percent of the children of the Virgin Islands of compulsory school age and many above it are enrolled in school. They attend with a high percentage of regularity, running about 97 and 98 percent for recent years for which data are

available. Enrollment and attendance at school are apparently well-established habits which were formed before the American occupation and continued under the government by the Navy. There are not, therefore, the usual serious problems encountered in this particular phase of school administration. School enrollment has been increasing gradually year by year since 1927–28 despite the fact that the total population is decreasing; the largest number of children so far enrolled in the public schools were enrolled in 1931–32 when the number reached 3,228.

Enrollment by Grades, 1931-32

Grade	Enrollment	Grade	Enrollment
1	554	7	176
2	500	8	93
3	462	9	96
4	496	10	36
5	425	11	10
6	314	12	6

The most serious problem concerned with school enrollment is found when one examines the record of enrollment by grades and finds children largely concentrated in the first five grades of the elementary schools. In 1931–32, the latest years for which data are available, approximately 78 percent of all children enrolled were in these grades. Throughout the first five grades enrollment is fairly constant. Beginning with the sixth grade falling off in enrollment is heavy, and it increases rapidly throughout the upper grades. For the year indicated (1931–32) 6 pupils were in the twelfth grade and 148 in the last four grades of the secondary school. This, of course, means that while a high percentage of children become literate, few attend school long enough to receive a creditable education or one really adequate to influence their future lives socially or economically.

Another unfortunate result is the presence of a large number of over-age children in the lower grades of the elementary school. Besides the seriousness of this situation to the individual's progress through school and to the system itself in the expense involved

Average Ages of Children Enrolled in 1931-32

Grade	Normal age	St. Thomas		St. Croix	
		Age	Over age	Age	Over age
1	6	7 9	1 9	8 2	2 2
2	7	9 5	2 5	8 6	1 6
3	8	10 10	2 10	9 10	1 10
4	9	11 6	2 6	11 1	2 1
5	10	13 0	3 0	13 3	3 3
6	11	14 1	3 1	15 2	4 2
7	12	14 9	2 9	14 7	2 7
8	13	15 6	2 6	16 3	3 3
		The above figures represent years and months			

in grade repetition, over-age children are apt to be socially maladjusted and become serious disciplinary problems. The presence of so many over-age children in the schools probably accounts in part for the fact that such problems are prevalent. At the close of the school year 1931–32 children in the first grade varied from an average of 1 year 9 months over age in St. Thomas and 2 years 2 months in St. Croix to more than 3 years average over age in both islands in the fifth grade. This average means that many children were from 4 to 6 years over age in the middle (fourth and fifth) elementary grades—a matter of considerable concern.

It appears that the weaknesses leading to the prevalence of retardation and high percentage of elimination in the elementary grades have not yet been overcome. Attacks are being made through efforts previously indicated to improve instruction and to formulate a more practical curriculum.

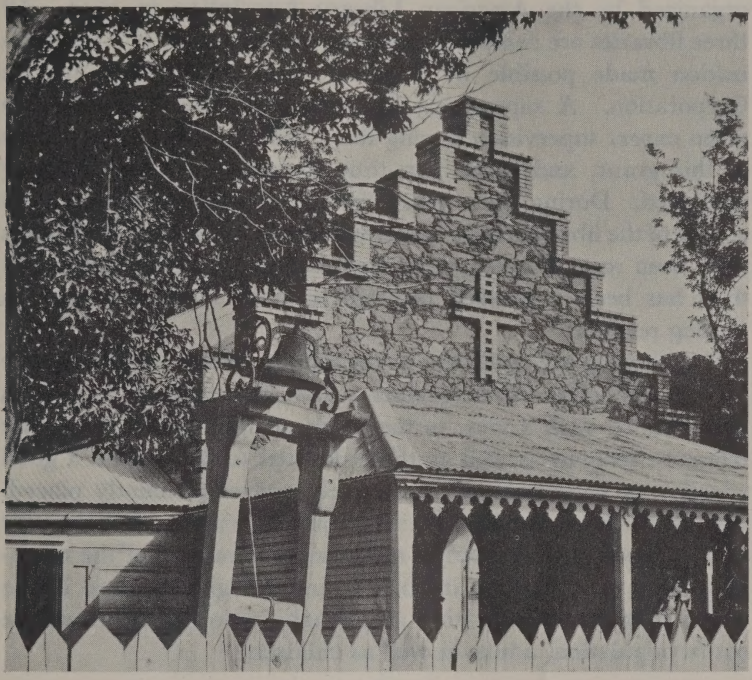
The School Buildings

GENERALLY speaking, the schools in the Virgin Islands occupy substantial, commodious, and attractive buildings. Many of the buildings were originally built for and doubtless were adapted to other than classroom purposes. They have, however, many excellent characteristics: They are generally well adapted to the country and the climate—open to admit an abundance of air and to provide cross ventilation, for example; they are substantially built to withstand recurrent hurricanes; they fit into their surroundings harmoniously, as do most of the fine old houses in the Virgin Islands, and conform to the prevailing style of architecture. In short, they seem less apart from the life of the people than do many better-adapted school buildings common in other localities.

However, since they are of an old style of architecture, and were originally planned for use as government offices, churches, barracks, and the like, though now remodeled and converted into schools, they are not always as appropriate as one might wish to school purposes, and the interiors leave much to be desired. The buildings are often more attractive without than within. Classrooms adapted in size, shape, and equipment to efficient instruction, good seating, proper lighting, and other hygienic requirements of modern school architecture in arrangement and equipment are not common. The St. Thomas High School, which occupies buildings formerly used as barracks during the years when St. Thomas was a naval station, illustrates prevailing practice in school housing.

The situation is mitigated by the very desirable qualities to which attention has been called; by the probability that the buildings have been acquired with little cost to the school system and under circumstances which may have necessitated a choice

between modern buildings and improved instruction; and by the realization that the schools are pioneering under circumstances not wholly without difficulties in financial as well as social conditions.



The Jefferson Elementary School at St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

The school buildings and grounds are generally well kept, and good school housekeeping prevails in the classrooms. Several schools have fine school gardens and many school grounds have been attractively planned with trees, shrubs, and a good variety of native plantings in which good taste and careful upkeep are evident.

Sanitary toilets, hygienic drinking facilities, and similar necessities have been quite generally provided in the schools throughout the islands.

Public Libraries

THERE are three public libraries, one in each of the three towns: Christiansted, Fredericksted, and St. Thomas. They were organized by the American Library Association in 1920. All three libraries are completing in 1933 the third year of a reorganization made possible by a 3-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation. A supervising librarian from the mainland has given expert supervision during the 3 years under the provisions of this grant, and three part-time librarians are permanently employed. During these years the appearance, usefulness, and service of the libraries have "increased immeasurably." Old books have been reconditioned, new ones purchased and donated, and there has been a marked increase in book circulation and in visiting readers.

The libraries are real assets to the islands. They are attractively housed and books and magazines, while not numerous, have been well selected with a view to the needs of the people. There are reference sections as well as those devoted to fiction and a good selection of magazines all attractively and conveniently placed. The libraries are particularly useful just now in the development of the school program and in the in-service training of the teachers. They have also an important and recognized place in the whole program of education and rehabilitation as it affects the entire population, adults as well as children.

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION